

## Community resources

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*courage is contagious*

## Viewing cable 09LONDON566, IRAN: KHAMENEI SAID TO CONSIDER RAHIM SAFAVI AND

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cable's unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#09LONDON566**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09LONDON566	2009-03-03 19:52	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET//NOFORN	Embassy London

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2011/04/17/112290/state-department-cables-reveal.html>

P 031952Z MAR 09  
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1616  
INFO IRAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
  
S E C R E T LONDON 000566

NOFORN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/03/2019  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PROP](#) [PTER](#) [IR](#) [UK](#)  
SUBJECT: IRAN; KHAMENEI SAID TO CONSIDER RAHIM SAFAVI AND  
TO WRITE OFF QALIBAF; VELAYATI MAY HAVE KEY ADVISORY ROLE

REF: A. 08 LONDON 2659 AND PREVIOUS  
[1](#)B. LONDON 451

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Summary: Expatriate broadcaster Ali Reza Nourizadeh sees Ahmedinejad as the current front-runner, but claimed to London Iran Watcher (Poloff) that Rahim Safavi is under consideration by the Supreme Leader as his own preferred candidate in Iran's June elections; Nourizadeh cited an unspecified regular contact of his within Khamenei's office whom Nourizadeh has previously claimed as a source (ref a). The same claimed source also reportedly told Nourizadeh that Khamenei has, in an elliptical fashion, told Qalibaf he should plan to stay on as Tehran mayor, and that Khamenei will not endorse Qalibaf's presidential bid. Countering an earlier prediction of his own, Nourizadeh argued Khamenei foreign affairs advisor Velayati will play an important advisory role in any engagement with the United States but is now less likely to be endorsed by Khamenei as a presidential candidate.

[1](#)2. (S/NF) Summary (continued) A XXXXXXXXXXXX (please protect) is planning to travel soon to Iran to make contact with Velayati and urge him to facilitate contact between the Supreme Leader's office and the USG. End Summary

Looking At Safavi  
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[1](#)3. (S/NF) Supreme Leader Khamenei is allegedly looking more closely at his military advisor, ex-IRGC commander Rahim Safavi, despite Safavi's lack of political experience, as a candidate Khamenei might support, expatriate broadcaster Ali Reza Nourizadeh told Poloff; Nourizadeh cited an unnamed source he has referenced before (ref a) and claims to have in Khamenei's office. Nourizadeh said Khamenei trusts few persons outside his immediate family or personal staff, and argued Safavi is the most viable potential candidate among Khamenei's staff or family. He said Khamenei's (alleged) consideration of Safavi is still strictly internal to the Supreme Leader's office; Nourizadeh claimed Safavi's brother, Syed Salman Safavi, is overseeing a website ([www.yahyasafavi.com](http://www.yahyasafavi.com)) which Nourizadeh argues is promoting Rahim Safavi's visibility by reporting what Nourizadeh claims are Rahim's recently more numerous public statements and appearances. In a separate conversation, a Tehran-based analyst told Poloff that Salman Safavi will in early March speak at the Caspian Institute, a leading Tehran think tank the analyst said is frequented by Western diplomats accredited to Tehran.

Brushing off Qalibaf  
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[1](#)4. (S/NF) Citing the same unnamed source in Khamenei's office, Nourizadeh said Qalibaf had been told by Khamenei that Qalibaf should plan to remain mayor of Tehran for the next five years. Nourizadeh told Poloff his source claimed the Supreme Leader had, when Qalibaf presented Khamenei with a plan for the development of Tehran over the next twelve months, told Qalibaf he "should be making (mayoral) plans for the next five years, not one year." Qalibaf reportedly was visibly downcast after the meeting.

Velayati: Uncharismatic as a  
Candidate, But Still Key Advisor  
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[1](#)5. (S/NF) Nourizadeh said his own previous prediction, that

former foreign minister Velayati would be tapped, seemed more doubtful now -- Nourizadeh maintained that Khamenei had quietly vetted Velayati but had judged the former foreign minister to be too elderly and too widely perceived by Iranian voters as uncharismatic and corrupt. He noted however that Velayati is still trusted by Khamenei and will in Nourizadeh's view likely be an important representative of and sounding board for Khamenei as the Supreme Leader prepares for direct engagement in some form with the United States.

XXXXXXXXXXXX Plans to Meet  
Velayati, Will Urge That Supreme  
Leader Open a Channel to USG  
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16. (S/NF) In a separate conversation, XXXXXXXXXXXX(please protect), prominent XXXXXXXXXXXX on Iran issues, a past visitor to Iran, and himself planning to travel soon to Iran to make contact with Velayati. XXXXXXXXXXXX volunteered that while in Iran he will urge Velayati to have Khamenei permit a channel of communication to the USG; XXXXXXXXXXXX commented that Khamenei, not Ahmedinejad, is in his view "the correct return address" for any USG outreach to Iran. XXXXXXXXXXXX past comments to Poloff on Iran tend to closely track FCO estimates, that the West has a narrow window for effective diplomatic action on Iran. Poloff reminded XXXXXXXXXXXX that during USG's ongoing senior level policy review, U.S. officials cannot comment or speculate publicly or privately on possible future courses of U.S. policy on Iran.

Comment  
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17. (S/NF) Although continuing to claim Khamenei is examining other figures in conservative circles as possible candidates, Nourizadeh's singling out Safavi may reflect his own over-reliance on his claimed source within Khamenei's office. Nourizadeh, nevertheless, still believes Ahmedinejad, despite his dismal economic record, has the inside track, and is the candidate at this point most likely to win. Nourizadeh attributes Ahmedinejad's electoral strength to his control of voting processes, to his popularity in Iran arising from his handling of the nuclear issue, and to his continuing populist, "every-man" image. Nourizadeh believes Ahmedinejad has no lasting interest in improved relations and argues the United States in any direct engagement with Iran should either delay outreach until after the elections so as to minimize the chances of boosting Ahmedinejad's prestige or, if acting before June, should use channels controlled by the Supreme Leader, not by Ahmedinejad.

18. (S/NF) XXXXXXXXXXXX contemplating the Velayati-focused visit to Iran has in the past been a source for Poloff of insights and information on Iran and on Iranians visiting the UK. XXXXXXXXXXXX above comments however, were the first indication Poloff has had that XXXXXXXXXXXX or other XXXXXXXXXXXX official intends advocating with Iranian officials for direct U.S.-IRIG contact; XXXXXXXXXXXX's specific objective, of promoting a USG channel to the Supreme Leader's office, is likewise new information to Poloff.

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